

Message Text

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PAGE 01 OTTAWA 00692 202324Z

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, CA

SUBJECT: PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE LEADERSHIP CONVENTION

POUCHED ALL CONSULS IN CANADA

REF: A) OTTAWA 577; B) OTTAWA 263

1. WITH ESTIMATES THAT UP TO HALF OF THE 2500 DELEGATES REMAIN UNCOMMITTED, PROBABLY THE MOST OPEN LEADERSHIP CONVENTION IN TORY HISTORY CONVENED IN OTTAWA THURSDAY.

2. IN OPENING NIGHT SPEECH, DIEFENBAKER TOOK APPARENT SWIPE AT BRIAN MULRONEY BY TELLING DELEGATES THAT NEW LEADER SHOULD HAVE "YEARS OF EXPERIENCE"-- A COMMON THEME OF STOP-MULRONEY STRATEGISTS IN RECENT DAYS. EARLIER IN WEEK, ABOUT 20 CONSERVATIVE MP'S SIGNED STATEMENT CALLING FOR NEW LEADER TO BE EITHER SITTING OR FORMER MP, ALTHOUGH TACTIC LATER ABANDONED FOR FEAR OF ONLY ENHANCING MULRONEY FRONT-RUNNER IMAGE. SPECULATION THAT MULRONEY MAY HAVE PEAKED EARLY OR THAT HIS SLICK AND EXPENSIVE CAMPAIGN WILL IN THE END ALIENATE TRADITIONALIST TORY DELEGATES HAS LED TO SUDDEN SURGE OF INTEREST IN POSSIBLE COMPROMISE CANDIDATES-- NOTABLY ALBERTA MP JOE CLARK. THOUGH EVEN YOUNGER THAN MULRONEY AND CONSIDERED RED TORY, CLARK COULD

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PAGE 02 OTTAWA 00692 202324Z

STAGE UPSET IF IMPASSE DEVELOPS.

3. ALTHOUGH SURVEYS SHOW THAT MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE TO DELEGATES IS CANADIAN ECONOMY AND INFLATION, ONLY ECONOMIST CANDIDATE JAMES GILLIES HAS DISCUSSED SUBJECT ABOVE RHETORICAL LEVEL AND PREDICTABLY PUT DELEGATES TO SLEEP. MOST VOTES THUS EXPECTED TO BE CAST ON BASIS OF CANDIDATE PERSONALITIES AND GENERAL POLITICAL ORIENTATIONS RATHER THAN ISSUES. SATURDAY NIGHT SPEECHES WILL PROBABLY BE DICEISIVE IN SWAYING HEARTS AND MINDS OF DELEGATES FOR SUNDAY BALLOTING.

4. GIVEN DIFFICULTY OF GAUGING PERSONALITY APPEAL, UN-DECIDED VOTE, ABILITY OF CANDIDATES TO CONTROL AND DELIVER DELEGATIONS, AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST TORY DEATH-WISH COMPLEX, THIS RACE IS PARTICULARLY HARD TO PREDICT, AS SHOWN BY WIDE ASSORTMENT OF SCENARIOS FROM PUNDITS. MULRONEY RECEIVED CONVENTION-EVE BOOST BY ENDORSEMENTS FROM LE DEVOIR AND LA PRESSE, HOWEVER, AND HE REMAINS CANDIDATE WITH MOST STRENGTH ON BOTTOM-LINE ISSUE OF BEATING TRUDEAU. IF HIS CONVENTION PERFORMANCE SUSTAINS FEELING THAT HE HAS THE MOST CHARISMA TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF TRUDEAU'S DECLINING FORTUNES AND BRING TORIES BACK TO POWER, HE WILL BE DIFFICULT AND PERHAPS IMPOSSIBLE TO STOP.
ENDERS

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